

# The Hole News

May, 2009

Volume 24 Number 5





May, 2009

Chartered in 1984 as the 300th Grotto of the NSS



Volume 24 Number 5

# Ess Cave Re-Repair



*Mike Gray works hard repairing and re-enforcing the gate to Ess Cave.*

*Photo by Bill Bentley*

**By Kel Thomas**

The weekend of May 16-17 brought eight PBSS members to Ess Cave, west of Iraan, TX, with the mission to repair a vandalized gate. Also the gang retrieved and disposed of many pounds of trash left after one or more local beer and God knows what other type of party or parties had occurred.

Cavers in attendance were: Tony Abernathy, Bill Bentley, Walter Feaster, Mike Gray, Lori Hales, Barry Hayes, Jacqui Thomas and Kel Thomas.

Lori, Mike and Barry arrived early to set-up the welder and spent the day (a very long day) Saturday rebuilding the gate.

In the meantime Tony, Bill, Walter, Jacqui and Kel removed trash from within the cave and also around the cave entrance and campsite.

A million thanks to Barry for bringing the welding machine and cutting torch equipment and to Mike and Lori for their incredible hard work in making Ess Cave secure again.

The Hole News is the monthly publication of the Permian Basin Speleological Society. Articles and cartoons may be reproduced by cave oriented publications that exchange newsletters with PBSS, as long as proper credit is given to the author. Please observe copy righted © articles. Items for this newsletter can be sent to the Editor, The Hole News, c/o Kel Thomas, P.O. Box 1326 Sonora, TX 76950 or e-mail to [kthomas@sonoratx.net](mailto:kthomas@sonoratx.net). Regular membership dues are only \$15.00 and include one voting right, associate (must be in the same household as a regular member) membership is \$7.50 and does not include a newsletter. Dues should be sent to PBSS Treasurer, c/o Bill Bentley, 400 Eastwood Dr. Midland, TX 79703. If you're interested in caving or even if you think you might like to try it, e-mail Bill Bentley at [caver@caver.net](mailto:caver@caver.net).

## Scheduled Upcoming Events

**May 23-25:**  
**SWR Regional,**  
**Ft. Stanton, NM**

**June 9:**  
**PBSS Meeting, 7:00 p.m.**  
**Murray's Deli**

**June 13:**  
**5-Mouth Cave dig,**  
**Sonora, TX**

**July 19-26:**  
**ICS/NSS conventions,**  
**Kerrville, TX**

**October 16-18:**  
**Texas Cavers Reunion,**  
**Paradise Canyon,**  
**Medina River**

**Nov. 7:**  
**Carlsbad Caverns**  
**Rock Haul**

# The Hole News

May, 2009

## PBSS April Meeting Minutes

We met in our back room at Murray's and competed for food with an entire bus load of hungry people. The meeting opened at 1905 (7:05pm) with several downward motions of the sacred catsup bottle.

### Present:

Bill Bentley, Tony Abernathy, Dustin Gashette, Dominic Percoco, Sharon Long

### Treasurer's report:

We have money. (\$661.44). The TSA check cleared. We have several members who are not paid up on dues. If you are one or aren't sure, our illustrious Treasurer Bill Bentley will be happy to tell you if you are in arrears and/or take your \$\$.

### New Business:

Kelly Long has left us for Kansas (!) and Sharon will be headed that way at an as yet unknown time.

We discussed the upcoming dig which will be attend-

ed by most of the usual suspects-- unfortunately Tony will not be able to attend but he might surprise us.

We agreed that we can hold a meeting closer to Herman in Alpine--perhaps in Fort Stockton--if he can shake loose a Tuesday evening. More on that after we hear from Herman.

We will change the I/O report to have the PBSS copy of the NSS News go to the Sibley Center. We also decided at last meeting to donate to Sibley the copy of "50 Years of Texas Caving" that we originally purchased for the Public Library. Kerry has the book and perhaps "we" forgot to tell Kerry about that decision. (Kerry and Sharon can maybe work that out)?

Tony still has not received his NSS card and Jacqui will check on that.

### ASU report:

ASU's group, officially

named DIRT, is working on developing some trainings and plans to be appreciative of any assistance from PBSS. The group has a remailer, now, and sent the sign-up information to all via the PBSS remailer. DIRT now has helmets, lights and vertical gear.

### We have trips planned:

#### April:

Five Mouth this weekend (since cancelled due to rain and flood)

TSA Convention next weekend (24-26)

#### May:

16th--Ess Cave

#### June:

5- Mouth dig or following a lead east of Sonora

#### July:

ICS/NSS Convention

#### August:

16th--training for DIRT (ASU)

#### September:

???

#### October:

TCR  
**November:**  
Carlsbad Rock Haul is back! Nov. 7th  
**December:**  
Christmas party to be decided

We will check with TCMA about PBSS access to Amazing Maze since many PBSSers have an intimate knowledge of the cave and it is the TCMA cave closest to Midland

Jacqui has successfully completed her 3rd trip through Deep Cave and can now lead trips.

The link for animated knot-tying is: [www.animatedknots.com](http://www.animatedknots.com)

The meeting was closed at 2021 (8:21 pm)

Respectfully  
(albeit belatedly)  
submitted,  
Jacqui Thomas

## PBSS May Meeting Minutes

PBSS met for the 305th time May 12, 2009 at Murray's Deli in Midland. Those in attendance were Bill Bentley, Tony Abernathy, Walter Feaster and Kel Thomas. Our illustrious president, Jacqui Thomas was unable to attend.

As highest ranking officer in attendance, Bill Bentley brought the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. with the rapping of the sacred ketchup bottle.

### Treasurer's report:

At TSA spring convention we donated \$100 to ICS and received dues from new member Herman Miller. Also, dues were received from Jacqui and Kel making a total of \$606.44 in our coffers.

### Old Business:

5-Mouth dig for April cancellation due to flooding. The cave has since been drained and is drying.

TSA report by Bill Bent-

ley.

### New Business & trips:

Ess Cave May 16, 2009  
Ft. Stanton SWR Regional Memorial Day weekend  
June PBSS meeting June 9,  
5-Mouth dig June 13, 2009  
ICS/NSS in July  
TCR in October

Carlsbad Rock Haul Nov. 7  
Kel will resurrect "The Hole News"

### Program:

Kel gave a PowerPoint presentation on White Nose

Syndrome. This was the same program given by Jim Kennedy at the spring TSA.

### Adjournment:

The 305th meeting of PBSS was brought to a close at 8:05 p.m. in the usual ketchup friendly way.

Humbly submitted by stand-in minute/census-taker,  
Kel Thomas

## PBSS's Sonora Excavation

By Jacqui Thomas

### A History:

Five Mouth Cave on Five Mouth Cave Ranch in Sonora has been filled-in since it was found by Dr. John Fields' ancestor in 1883. Before that, it was known to people who lived in this area a few thousand years ago, then later to people, mostly Comanche, passing through as they travelled from water source to water source. When Dr. Fields was growing up there was still soot on the ceiling from campfires, and there are reports that there were paintings of red pigment. As far as the cave being painted, there are a couple

of high places in the ceiling that have a reddish tint to them that is incongruous but there is no sign of what have been called "well-executed" drawings. Dr. Fields does not remember any prints and there is no sure sign of them now.

Dr. Fields remembers being able to stand in the cave with headroom until after the drought of the 1950s. The drought was broken by a year of forty inches of rain, which washed all the drought-dry soil of the surrounding pasture into the cave.

A few years ago, Dr. Fields put his ranch hand's two sons to work digging out the cave as their summer

jobs. They were to watch for any artifacts—dart points, etc., that might have washed in—and move the tailings to an area where they couldn't wash back into the cave.

The boys succeeded in digging to the floor in the main room that summer. The next summer was one of Sutton County's wettest and the boys were unable to dig. After that, the boys were no longer available for digging.

In 2008, I mentioned to Jeryl Fields that I explore caves with a group from Midland, and she said she and her husband had a cave that needed to be dug out some. Soon we had a trip set for August.



*Five Mouth Entrances: 3 of 5.*

*Kerry, Tony, Bill, Dr. John Fields and Jacqui  
(picture by Sharon Long)*

### Current dig:

We have had five trips, now, and have removed over 15 yards of material from the cave. We have been very careful to inspect all tailings as we are digging, as they leave the cave, and again as they are poured into the Bobcat bucket, and have found a few dart points

and two knife blades.

There have been no arrowheads and there probably will not be any, as the people who frequented this area were pre-bow and arrow and used primarily throwing spears (atlatls). The points we have found have been Bulverde, Castro, and possibly a Tortugas.



*Rain slowed down the first dig; we finally had to give up.*

*Continued on page 5*

# The Hole News

May, 2009



*Kerry and Bill start the trench during the 2nd trip.*



*By the 01/31-02/01 trip we not only had a trench but we had a cart to run in it.  
(Sam is pushing).*

The trips have been attended by Permian Basin Speleological Society members Tony Abernathy, Bill Bentley, Walter Feaster, Sharon Long, Kelly Long, Kerry Lowery, Hunter Lowery, Patrick Ray and Jacqui Thomas;

PBSS guests: Jerry Atkin-

son; Lucas Clark, and Carolyn Bentley;

And Angelo State University Caving Club members: Melinda (Mindy) Armitage, Samantha (Sam) Cleveland, Dustin Gashette (also PBSS), A.J. Gemoets, Aaron Glass, and Dominic Percoco.

---

*Dr. Fields has since pumped the cave and we have a trip scheduled for the weekend of June 13th. Kel and Jacqui will arrange to take a look at the cave and assess its diggability before the June trip.*

*The dig is starting to require more people than we can field on a weekend and the Lubbock Area Grotto (LAG) has been invited to join us.*

*We still have a trench (above) and we still have a cart but the May trip was cancelled due to over three inches of rain.*

# The Hole News

May, 2009



*And we are always being watched*



## Where is Brad and Janet?

Some time ago, this editor started receiving trip reports from someone named Karsten D. Pohl. They were published as installments under the title The Saga of Brad and Janet, one behind so we could publish a teaser for the next installment. They can be found in the newsletters posted to the PBSS website. The last installment was published in the February 2007 Hole News.

For you who do not wish to look up the first five installments, here is a synopsis:

Brad and Janet, Louisianans displaced to Southwest Texas, are living in a travel trailer, all they can afford on Brad's propane delivery job. One evening, when they were walking Janet's mother's chihuahua, the dog escaped to chase an armadillo into a hole under a tree. Brad was able to flag down a passing Powerwagon and enlist the help of the passengers, a group of cavers (calling themselves B.U.T.T.) returning home from a caving trip.

They did not find the dog, whose name they misheard to be 'Biner, but figured the air-blowing hole he'd escaped into was worth exploring. The hole went, then dropped about 100 feet. Janet watched them rig, then one of the members descended, returning to report that the cave continued. One of the group, Doug, said he could come back to help explore and survey. Janet's mother, Mrs. Esserherff, crawled in, found her dog, and looked around. Deciding that her daughter deserved something in her life more fun than Brad she solved Janet's landowner problem by buying the wedge of property holding the cave entrance. Doug returned as promised and he and Janet had a couple of exploration trips before the reports from Karsten stopped.

## A Letter from Janet

Dear Editor of the Hole News,

I'm sending this to you because I think Doug was sending his story to you.

He was writing about the cave he helped Brad and me find. Anyway, I'm guessing PBSS because Doug said he started caving with some PBSS people, then I found the Hole News on your website and there was Doug's story, even tho it had that Karsten D. (for

Douglas) Pohl name on it. He really is Douglas Pohlman I guess he thought he was being funny.

I guess it's kind of a trip report and I want to tell you what happened after. Here's the story.

We was so excited when we chipped out enough rock to get through the hole!

Doug told me the big breeze meant there must be a lot of cave and I

couldn't hardly wait to see what was on the other side. We left it with the hole almost big enough for me-I got my helmet light through but I couldn't see around the corner and it was pitch black like the rock was sucking up the light or something.

We took a chisel and a heavy hammer and it didn't take too much to get the hole big enough for me-the limestone just flaked off when we hit it right.

*Continued on pg. 7*

# The Hole News

May, 2009

The wind got stronger and there was a smell like the one when we first got in the cave, sort of damp like compost in a garden. Doug said that was kinda odd, that it shouldn't smell like that so far in because there's no light.

And he said a bigger hole should make it less windy, I guess like breathing out with a pucker makes a whistle but with an open mouth your breathe goes every which way. I squeezed all the way through. There wasn't a tunnel or anything, just a pinch about a foot long. The trick was getting my chest through but Doug told me to go in at like an angle, one shoulder a little in front of the other. That worked then I about freaked when my butt got stuck for a second, only a second but really

scary. Doug is long and skinny and only needed to take out one more flake to get through.

We found ourselves in a wide room almost as tall as Doug with a crack in the ceiling going from the hole we came in to a hole on the other end of the room, about 20 feet away. The crack was like a trench with stalactites hanging all along it. The floor was sparkly dirt with a few stalagmites and formation lumps. The floor under the crack looked kinda scuffed and there was a broken stalactite in the dirt. I knew I didn't bump it and I didn't see Doug bump it and Doug said that was strange he knew he didn't bump it.

The hole on the other end had a big breeze and that same dirt smell and

a sort of a garbage smell, too. Doug reached back for the tools and went to tap the hole big enough for me. The next hole wasn't by the floor it was midway up the wall. Doug gave me a boost and I had to bend at my waist and reach for the floor and I fell into a room about 12 feet tall in the middle and about as long as the last one.

Doug stuck his head through then said Janet I'm leaving and backed out.

Well, I didn't know why Doug was so spooky because this room felt better to me than the last one. There was a little breeze and he could of stood up everywhere. There wasn't much pretty so I thought that was why he stayed out. I didn't want him to leave there was another hole at the end of the new room and I really wanted to go through it. Gotta run, more later.

I'm sure it has to get pretty.  
Janet

## PBSS Officers

*President*  
**Jacqui Thomas**

*Vice President*  
**Sharon Long**

*Secretary/Treasurer*  
**Bill Bentley**

*Newsletter*  
**Kel Thomas**

## Photo Credits

COVER PHOTO:  
Helectites in the Caverns of Sonora by Kel Thomas  
PAGE 2: Ess Cave gate by Bill Bentley  
PAGE 4 : 5-Mouth cave by Sharon Long and Jacqui Thomas  
PAGE 5: 5-Mouth cave by Jacqui Thomas

Welcome

New PBSS Member:  
*Herman Miller of*  
*Alpine*

**PBSS Home Page**  
<http://www.caver.net/pbss/pbss.html>  
**Built and maintained by Bill Bentley**

